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A

LETTER

To the AUTHOR of the

FARMER's

LETTERS.

By a Country GENTLEMAN.

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SIR.

A Little gentle Reproof from ſo uncouth a Pen as mine, may not be amiſs to ſo fine a one as yours, to let you ſee in the ſpirit of Sobriety and Charity, what bounds you have overleaped in a very different one.

You Poets, more ſubject to a violent Agitation of Spirits, than other Men, ſeldom judge of Things juſtly, 'till you give your ſelves Time to think coolly what you induſtriouſly avoid upon ſeveral Occaſions, particularly thoſe of Party——Fancy raiſes a Storm: and the Underſtanding, which ſhould reſtrain its impetuoſity, is oft' overſet by it, eſpecially where the Sea-Room is narrow, Rocks at Hand and the Shore in ſight. Yours, Sir, has ſuffered Ship-wreck on this Coaſt.—— A ſpirit of *Party*, the worſt a Poet ever choſe, has plunder'd your Reaſon, and you are ſo fond of this new Gueſt that you let it looſe to commit a Rape upon that of every other Perſon. Without Figure, inſtead of *healing*, you endeavour to widen the Wounds of one of the pooreſt Nations at this Day under the Sun; and all this without the leaſt Regard to Humanity, Decency or Truth.

I do not mean in this Complaint to derogate from the Fame you have ſo juſtly acquired by the maſterly Talents you poſſeſs: Such a Blow would juſtly recoil upon my ſelf. and beſides, I wou'd ſcorn ſo weak and mean an Attempt. I peruſed ſeveral of your Poetical Performances with great Satisfaction, and often lamented that ſo fine a Genius ſhould want the Encouragement it deſerves in both theſe Iſles.—— But really at preſent I am much leſs uneaſy at any Diſapointements you may meet with in Quality of a fine Writer; for you want the *Nobleſt*, becauſe it is the *Honeſteſt*, Character of a great one, I mean Candor and fair-dealing. This is ſo evident in your *Farmer's Letters*, that it turns the Stomachs of your greateſt Admirers, who are ſorry to ſee one who animated his firſt Works with the moſt exalted Sentiments of Virtue and public Spirit, all at once, and without Provocation, plunged into the Abyſſes of Scurrility, Injury and Party-Rage—— *Tantane animis cæleſtibus Iræ?*

Pray, Sir, why ſo unmercifully ſevere upon the poor

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Catholics of these Kingdoms, who never offered you the least Injury? a People among whom you cou'd reckon upon many Friends, and from whom the Government has nothing to fear, unless thro' their Incapacity to serve it much in its Day of Danger?——You revile their Persons while you mistake (wilfully mistake) their Principles. For you give them such as are not at all to be found in human Nature, depraved and corrupted as it is; and such only as may become the Infernal Host with *Satan* at the Head of it. You have indeed quite outdone the Thing. Like the Hero in Romance you fall down with the weight of your own Stroke, and really make a figure more like One of *Old Oliver's* Ecclesiastic Drummers than a celebrated Writer, who to the choicest Periods, should subjoin the necessary Concomitants of Decency, Truth and manly Matter. Why all this rabid fury against a People whom you know to be innocent? Why this ungenerous Treatment at the very Time that a Penal Bill is depending against them in Parliament? Is this to be a Patriot, an Assertor of Liberty? I think not. Some indeed are ill natur'd enough to assert that your *Ends* are as bad as your *Means*.—— They pretend that you do not serve * *two Masters* any more than his Holiness of *Rome*, that like him you chose the *worst*, and that the *Mammon of Iniquity* is the Corner-Stone of all this Patriotism------ If so, I can assure you that you have strained the Cord a little too hard, as the great P——ff generally does, and have sufficiently opened the Eyes of such as you intended to blind. For were your Zeal as unfeigned as it is Seasonable, it would, like that of the rest of your Brother-Writers, be more becoming with Respect to Persons and Things. But you regard neither.——————

The Powers you give the Church of Rome, Sir, to *Damn*, *Belye* and *Torture* for God's sake, cannot be too much detested or guarded against; but were she really what her own Sons believe her to be, that is, the *Reverse* of your *horrid Picture*; yet who does not see that the *forcing* her Doctrines upon any People must tend to her own Ruin, as well as that of all civil and religious Liberty. Force in such a Case, whether by active or negative Punishments, is abominable; and may the Authors of all such impious and

* See the *Farmer's* second *Letter*. Page 5.

unchriſtian Converſions fail in their Attempts! How eaſy was it for you Sir to diſplay your Oratory in ſo open and wide a field; to expatiate upon ſo ſeaſonable and uncontroverted a Truth; to warn your Countrymen againſt all poſſible and probable Dangers of Perſecution and Tyranny?—— But inſtead of this, you fall like a *Hercules furens* upon the poor R. Catholics of Ireland; the *labouring* the *Pitied*, and the pitiable Part of this diſtreſſed Kingdom!—

You are no more pleaſed with their peaceable Behaviour at preſent, than with the Violence of their Fathers; and you generouſly remind the *Proteſtants* of Ireland that this Crocodile ſeems only aſleep to be the ſurer of his Prey, and that they ſhould dread the heavier *Storm* from ſo ſullen a *Calm*.—— We thank you, witty Mr. *Farmer*! But this is nothing: You ſeem to call out in earneſt for the *Inquiſitor's Faggot*, for if your Deſcription be juſt, what Tortures do we not merit from Government! * We derive our happineſs (ſay you) from Villainies and Murders, from Rapes, Rapines and Mid-night Maſſacres! There is no Virtue we do not condemn; no Vice we do not ſantify—— All Nature is a Juggle in our Hands, and our God-head is Dæmoniſm!——— Who is not warmed with this beautiful Climax of perſuaſive Pathos? What *Puritan* Tub-preacher with all his Apparatus of Popery, Slavery, Idolatry, Antichriſt *and the Scarlet Whore of Babylon*, could be more pertinent, polite and witty? But, *Occidit Miſoros repetita Crambe*. You ſhould not in this manner rob the poor *Fanatic* of his only beſt Weapons; your own would become you better, and 'till you gird them on again, you never ſhall be my Hero. In your preſent Condition indeed you reſemble a true Lyon calling forth all his fury; you laſh your Sides 'till the Blood runs about, the Object of your Wrath in the mean Time gets clear of your Fangs.

For God's ſake Sir, what have the *R. Catholics* of Ireland to anſwer for in the preſent Troubles? Had they the leaſt Hand in this or the laſt Rebellion? Are not both the work of the *ſame Men*? of the Male-content Proteſtants of *Scotland* and *England*? of thoſe whoſe Religion, in the Act of Union, is called the *True Proteſtant Religion*? Should not theſe *Proteſtants*, Sir, be the proper Objects of all your Po-

* See the Farmer's ſecond Letter, Page 6

litical Wrath, if it be political? Would not all this be more becoming your Zeal than laying your *Brat* at the Door of Popery, which disclaims it?

Das veniam Corvis, vexas Censura Columbas! Juven: You think your self Wise no doubt in this Proceeding; But you are no *Solomon* who would thus rob the true Mother——He, by a seemingly cruel Stratagem, would fain discover the Owner of a controverted Child; But you, where there is no Dispute at all, would tear another Limb from Limb, rather than not bestow the *one Half* at least on a poor Dame long ago past Child-Bearing, and who cannot even support herself, but for the paternal Indulgence of her worthy Master who lets her lease in his Fields.

You assert, yes, you shamefully and inadvertently assert, that no Popish Nation ever enjoyed any Branch of *Civil* or *Religious* Liberty. *O lepidum Caput!* Nay, you go farther with still greater imprudence, and grant, that if any such *Ever* existed, you admit a possibility that the like may *again* come to pass! Here, Sir, I shall joyn Issue with you and let it be tried by evidence of Facts, as well as the Testimonies of the best Protestant Writers who ever set Pen to Paper. But before I proceed further with you, I would willingly learn from you what Infatuation drove you so unwarily into a Ditch in which you are thus sunk Head and Ears? 'Tis cruel to take you at this Disadvantage; but you give no Quarter yourself. Had you indeed averred that no Popish Kingdom at this Day enjoys *Civil* Liberty, no Body would be hardy enough to dispute that Point with you, since he must undoubtedly have a bad Design in doing so: But your inconsiderate Retrospection to past Times, looks as if your own Design was none of the best, and that you *indirectly* plead for the Cause you so *warmly* seem to condemn; not unlike the Cavaliers in *Cromwel's* Days, who in their Writings and Speeches pretended to be the most violent Republicans, while they were *privately* taking measures to restore the Monarchy—— For thus; if it can be proved (and I shall prove it by and by) that any Branch of *Civil* Liberty existed amongst the Popish Governments of former Times, then Sir, what will the World think of your Inference, "*That Popery and Ci-*

vil Liberty may again exiſt together."--- What does ſuch a Confeſſion ſeem to tend to? For whoſe cauſe does it appear Calculated?

To ſhew you that many Branches of *Civil* Liberty have formerly exiſted in ſpite of the *Papal Hierarchy*, (as you're pleas'd to ſtyle it) I refer you to M. *Rapin*'s Hiſtory of *England*; to the Authors of *Cato*'s *Letters*, and more particularly thoſe of the *Craftſ-man*: The Teſtimonies of ſuch Writers are as explicite againſt you, as they are ſufficient. But if any doubt ſhould remain with you; a thouſand others can be produced.

Pray good Sir, did you ever read the Hiſtory of your own Country, for which you publiſh'd ſuch pompous Propoſals about a year ago? Were ever People more free than the ancient Scots of *Ireland*? or was it not to the Exceſs of Liberty that their Conſtitution (reſting upon too popular a Foundation) was rent to pieces in the eleventh Century? and did you not your ſelf Virtually aſſert this in your printed Dedicatory Preface? or have you never conſulted the Hiſtory Of the *Gothic* Governments of *Europe*, ſo highly applauded by the late Dr. *Swift* and the greateſt Writers of this Age? Did you ever read of the *Saxon* Government in England, which the ingenious Author of the *Conſtitutional Journal* has the other Day called the *mildeſt* and *freeſt* that any Country ever knew? or what muſt you ſay to the *Norman* Government which ſoon fell into the ſame Channel, was the *Magna Charta* ſo oft confirm'd under the *Plantagenet* Race, any Recognition of *Civil* Rights? Did the Parliaments and States of *France* enjoy any Branch of *Civil* Liberty before the Introduction of ſtanding Armies? or were the *Spaniards* Slaves before the letting aſide of their famous *Cortes*? Will you Anſwer all theſe Queries in the Negative, Sir?--- 'Tis pity to preſs ſo many upon you; but you may thank your own Imprudence, and that Rage of *Party* which would not let you ſee the moſt *glaring Indiſcretion*, as well as *Blunder* that ever a Writer of your Reputation fell into.

It is a moſt melancholly Conſideration to ſee the warfare between Liberty and Slavery almoſt at an end: The latter rides paramount; She drags the World in her Triumphs, and rejoyces in the Rattles of its Chains; while her

defeated Adversary shuts herself up in these Western Islands, which evermore proved her Citadels in the Day of danger: Here she may sit secure and bid Defiance to all the overt Attacks of her grand Enemy, if she takes care not to commit too much of her Confidence to a deceitful, evil-minded Jade called *Party*, who lately pressed impudently into her Service, and bodders Mankind with her professions of *Fidelity*: For a Report having spread about that she is really a Spy in the Service of Slavery, and her Cousin-German once Removed, she makes use of this and a thousand other Arts to impose upon the weak and unwary: Among others she oft' puts on the Mask and Apparel of her Mistress and wonderfully personates that God-like form, 'till she is discover'd in the unfolding of her Actions and *Partiality of her Instructions*. She is naturally factious, cruel, selfish and equivocal; while Liberty is humane, equitable, tender-hearted and disinterested.--- The one disposes of her Favours to those only who obey her Nod. The other is no Respecter of Persons, but dispences Justice equally to all her Friends of every Denomination; The one Rewards Vice when listed in her Service, the other punishes it wherever she finds it; but still more like a Mother than a Tyrant. *Party* swells a Gnat into a Mountain, and the Infirmities of human Nature into Capital Crimes: But Liberty excuses invincible Weaknesses and detests the Exaggeration of them. It would be worth your while, Sir, to reflect which of these Ladies deserve most to be served; You have, I hope, made choice of the former without Reflection, otherwise a Gentleman who hitherto bore so amiable a Character as you did, would not at this Time become so redoubted a Champion for *Party*—— You should attack none but such as have openly declared War against the Constitution and Liberties of their Country:

Too much cannot be said to unite all Parties in the cause of their King, which is too apparently that of their Country. His Government is the *mildest* upon the whole Face of the Earth; and the *R. Catholics* have every Day experienced its Lenity and Mercy. This Royal and Illustrious Family secured *Liberty* to those they found free at their Accession, and they extended it to those who had it not,

who were incapacitated by Volumes of *legal Reſtrictions*. They releaſed the penal Laws againſt *Papiſts*, in the Execution: Could more be expected or rather could ſo much? Was there ever a more endearing Invitation to Loyalty, a firmer a fairer Right to perſonal Love? Conſider this, O ye *Britons*! and ſee what a weak Foundation there is for a Jealouſey of Liberty under this great Monarch when you ſee his Royal Hand thus ſtretching it out to a People whom by Law he could render wretched and miſerable. Theſe are Points, Sir, very worthy your Notice; To inculcate this wou'd be a Task worthy a Patriot, and worthy you, who are infinitely more equal to it than I can pretend to be: But you are not cool nor candid enough for it in your preſent Diſorder. You are not at Leiſure to conſider that we are Embarked in the *ſame Veſſel* with the reſt of our Fellow-ſubjects, and that during the preſent Storm we ſhou'd all according to our different Abilities lend our Hands for its Preſervation. Far from it--- Inſtead of this you ſtrive to raiſe a Scuffle on Board; and by the Deſcription you give of one Part of the Crew, you wou'd fain work up the Owners into a cruel Perſuaſion that there can be no ſafety for the Veſſel 'till theſe *wicked Sinners* are thrown over Deck---- There I drop you Sir, in Contemplation of the Injury you offered an *Innocent People*, whom you know to be weak, and whom without the *Royal Favour*, you know to be defenceleſs. I leave you likewiſe to think ſeriouſly of the real wrong you have done your ſelf in theſe your elaborate Invectives. I have offer'd you none. I am rather your Friend upon the Occaſion; and if you avail your ſelf of this Rebuke as you ought, you will owe an Obligation to, Sir,

your very humble Servant,

RUSTICUS.